

Chapter 9 Public Scoping

9.0 Initial Scoping

The intent of the scoping process is to identify the significant issues for study in the PEIR and to determine the scope of the analysis of each issue (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15083). The scoping process involves distributing a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of the PEIR, holding public scoping meetings, and requesting comments from agencies and individuals. All comments are evaluated and summarized in a report and used to develop the scope of the PEIR.

In June of 2000, CAL FIRE (then CDF) completed and certified a programmatic EIR for the department's Vegetation Management Program (VMP). In January of 2002, the Superior Court of San Francisco County ordered that the EIR be decertified for failure to adequately address the potential environmental impacts of the program. Herbicide use in association with VMP projects was cited specifically (e.g., herbicides used as either a precursor step or a follow-up maintenance step to a VMP project). Where appropriate, information developed as a part of this EIR may be incorporated into the proposed Vegetation Treatment Program EIR.

In 2005, the Legislature passed and the Governor signed into law SB 1084 (Kehoe), which broadened the range of vegetation treatment practices specifically enumerated in the Public Resources Code, added a definition of "hazardous fuel reduction," and made other changes to the major statutory provisions guiding CAL FIRE's vegetation treatment authorities. See Public Resources Code sections 4461-4494.

On August 12, 2005, CAL FIRE filed a NOP for the Vegetation Management Program Draft Environmental Impact Report (SCH #2005082054). CAL FIRE conducted scoping for the proposed draft EIR, including public scoping meetings held in Redding, Sacramento, Fresno, and Riverside during August 2005. Since the time of the Department's issuance of the earlier NOP, the Department and the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection have determined that it is more appropriate for the Board to be the lead agency for the proposed program. This determination is based on the Board's role in developing the regulations and policies that CAL FIRE implements through its various vegetation treatment programs. A total of 11 written comments were submitted as a result of the NOP filed by CAL FIRE in August 2005. Comments were submitted by private individuals, researchers, state and federal land managers, and state regulatory agencies.

A series of public scoping sessions was held around the state over the last two weeks of August 2005. Meetings were held in Redding, Sacramento, Fresno and Riverside CA, usually between 5:30 and 8:30 PM. A total of 15 public comments were submitted during the public comment sessions.

At their regular meeting on March 8, 2006, the Board acted to accept the Lead Agency role for this EIR (now referred to as the Vegetation Treatment Program in order to avoid confusion with CAL FIRE's existing Vegetation Management Program). All scoping comments received by the Department in response to its earlier NOP have been incorporated by the Board as a part of the scoping for the Vegetation Treatment Program EIR proposed herein. The Board contracted with CAL

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FIRE to have CAL FIRE produce the Vegetation Treatment Program Draft Environmental Impact Report.

A slightly revised Notice of Preparation was filed with the State Clearinghouse on April 16, 2006 changing the lead agency to the State Board. An additional public comment period for the second Notice of Preparation ended on May 19, 2006. The Board solicited comments on the potentially significant environmental effects of implementing the Vegetation Treatment Program and requested assistance in identifying mitigation measures and feasible project alternatives that avoid or reduce impacts. Oral comments were received at a public scoping meeting held as a part of the May 4, 2006 meeting of the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, which took place during the Board's meeting at North Tahoe Conference Center in Kings Beach, CA. Written comments were also received at the same time.

Since that time the Board adopted a new 2010 California Fire Plan, which is risk based. The Board and Department were able to identify the resources necessary to move forward with preparation of the Draft VTPEIR and in April 2011 invited the public to provide any new information that may have occurred since the original 2005 Scoping Sessions. Two webinars, hosted by the Board of Forestry were held in April 2011, one on April 14 and the other on April 26 where CALFIRE staff presented an update to the public and agencies and solicited comments about the VTP. In May 2011, the Board of Forestry issued a scoping notice soliciting new public and agency comment on the preparation of the VTP EIR.

Chapter 10 List of Preparers & Individuals/Organizations Consulted

The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and BBW Associates prepared this EIR under the direction of the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection. The following individuals contributed to the preparation of this EIR.

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Portions of an earlier EIR, Final Program Environmental Impact Report for Vegetation Management Program, April 2000, prepared by Jones and Stokes Associates and CAL FIRE, are incorporated into this EIR. The overall content of this EIR reflects the work of the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, acting in its capacity as a contractor to the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection.